Spotlight on transformation

A Developmental Services Bulletin from the Ministry of Community and Social Services

The End of an Era:
Closing Ontario's Institutions for People with a Developmental Disability

The government has officially closed Ontario's last three institutions for people with a developmental disability. By closing the Huronia Regional Centre in Orillia, Rideau Regional Centre in Smiths Falls and Southwestern Regional Centre in Chatham-Kent, we have ended the era of institutionalizing people with a developmental disability. A new era, where people of all abilities can contribute and participate in Ontario communities, has already begun.

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Ontario

Ontario's Last Three Institutions for People with a Developmental Disability

Huronia Regional Centre in Orillia

- Opened in 1876
- Originally called the Orillia Asylum for Idiots. It was renamed the Ontario Hospital School.
- Resident population in 1971: 1,875

Rideau Regional Centre in Smiths Falls

- Opened in 1951
- Originally named the Ontario Hospital School, Smiths Falls
- Resident population in 1971: 2,070

Southwestern Regional Centre in Chatham-Kent

- Opened in 1961
- Originally named the Ontario Hospital School for Retarded Children at Cedar Springs
- Resident population in 1971: 937

Our History of Developmental Services

This moment has been a long time coming. We have housed people with a developmental disability in institutions for more than 100 years. Huronia Regional Centre, Ontario's first institution, opened in 1876.

Doctors counselled parents to send their children to institutions like Orillia's so they could be sheltered from the stresses of everyday life and the judgement of society. By the 1960s, the government operated 16 institutions in rural settings across the province. There, thousands of public servants provided the dedicated service and support families and residents depended on.

With time, however, attitudes started to change. Society began to see that people with a developmental disability didn't need to be secluded in an institution. They needed to be included in a community. In 1987, the Ontario government committed to closing institutions for people with a developmental disability by 2012.

Closing Ontario's Last Three Institutions

When this government took office, it promised to close Ontario's last three institutions by 2009 — three years ahead of schedule. The government invested $276 million to move nearly 1,000 people into new homes and strengthen community services and supports.

The average age of remaining institution residents was 51, and most had lived in institutions for about 39 years. Therefore, the government had to take great care and sensitivity with its plans. That meant working closely with residents, families, agencies and communities to find homes with the supports people needed and the opportunities they wanted.

Since 2004, nearly 1,000 people with a developmental disability have moved from these last three institutions into Ontario communities. For every resident who moved into the community:

- We actively involved family members or advocates.
- Residents moved close to their families and friends wherever possible.
- We balanced their wishes with available resources and the community's ability to support them.
- Services and supports were in place before they moved.

Thanks to the hard work of communities, agencies, ministry staff and families, many people from these three institutions are exploring new opportunities, gaining new skills and living closer to loved ones.

"To the people of Ontario with a developmental disability, both here and departed, we honour your legacy and celebrate your spirit. Our province is better because you have been in it"

— *Minister Madeleine Meilleur, Statement to the House on the closure of Ontario's last three institutions.*

From the Minister's Remarks to Community Living Ontario, April 1, 2009, Queen's Park:

Transforming Developmental Services for the Future

Together we have come far. We have ended the era of institutional living and begun the era of community living. In just five years, Ontario has passed new legislation, closed three institutions and invested nearly half a billion dollars to increase wages, strengthen services and create new supports.

Of course, it's one thing to live in a community, but it's another thing to be a part of it. That's why the government continues to transform Ontario's developmental services system to give more people the supports they need to participate in community life.

Creating Inclusive Communities is Everyone's Responsibility

We need more than new supports or new investments. We need new attitudes. We need more Ontarians to open their eyes to the strengths and opportunities people with a developmental disability bring to their communities. And we need the knowledge and creativity of individuals, families, agencies and advocates to guide us in the future as they have guided us in the past.

The fact is that we need to change the way we do things. While our government has made unprecedented progress in developmental services, we are dealing with an economy vastly different than it was five years ago. Last week's Budget outlined how different our financial reality is today, not only for Ontarians, but for people around the world.

How Your Organization Can Help

Since 2004, Ontario has committed record amounts to developmental services. Ontario's developmental services system helps more than 40,000 people with a $1.5-billion budget each year. And the 2009 Budget has signalled our government's commitment — even in tough times — to help people who need it most.

Nevertheless, the demand for developmental services and supports continues to grow. And we're calling on leaders in this sector to help us find ways to help more people with the resources we have been given. We ask you to stand with us as we build a future where all people with a developmental disability can enjoy the opportunity that is their birthright as Ontarians.

Together we have met our commitment to close institutions. Together we have met our commitment to overhaul outdated legislation. And together we will meet our commitment to transform Ontario's developmental services system into one that is modern, fair and financially sustainable for the future.

Want to learn more?

Visit our website, www.ontario.ca/community, to find out how two former residents of Ontario's institutions are doing in the community.

You can also learn about Ontario's last three institutions: the Huronia Regional Centre, the Rideau Regional Centre and the Southwestern Regional Centre.

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Our Latest Policy Forum: "A Home that's Right for Me"

We're bringing together agencies and families to share their knowledge and experiences so that we can develop a more individualized approach to residential supports. After the forums, a consultant will prepare a report that will help families and agencies work together to build individualized residential arrangements. Here are the details:

Agenda

- Overview of the Individualized Residential Model project
- Presentations by executive directors of agencies that have demonstrated a commitment to individualized supports
- Round table discussions with agencies and family members
- Group discussions

Dates

- Toronto – April 20
- London – April 24
- Ottawa – April 28 - this will be a bilingual session.
- Sudbury – April 30

Web Features

- A video of the Toronto forum's morning session will be posted on our website, **www.ontario.ca/community**, for everyone to see in late April.
- People who view the video will be able to provide feedback using an online survey.

Questions

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